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## Hasina sent back to sub-jail from hospital

UNB, Dhaka

Detained Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was sent back to the makeshift jail at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex yesterday after receiving treatment at the Square Hospitals for a week.

Former premier Hasina who has been suffering from multiple health complications including problems in her ears and eyes was admitted to the Square Hospitals for the second time on April 19.

Earlier, she had been admitted to the hospital on March 11 and discharged on March 30.

Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told news agency UNB that the former premier was sent

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## IMPACT OF HIGH FOOD, OIL PRICES

# 50pc higher trade deficit projected

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects that high prices of food and oil will push up Bangladesh's trade deficit for FY08 to around \$6 billion, which is around \$2-3 billion higher compared to the previous fiscal years.

The high trade imbalance will also push the current account balance into deficit, which had around \$1 billion surplus in the last fiscal

year, the IMF projected in a report on Bangladesh's current economic situation released last week.

"The pressure on the balance of payments has intensified significantly and our current account balance is now negative for the first time in several years," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said in a letter to the IMF recently.

The IMF report said Bangladesh's trade imbalance will be \$5.59 billion for FY08 compared to \$3.45 billion in

FY07.

On an average, Bangladesh's trade imbalance over the past decade has been around \$2-3 billion.

Bangladesh Bank sources agreed with the projection, saying the unusual higher trade imbalance could be due to rising import of highly priced rice, wheat and oil, and could be exacerbated by lowering exports.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## Saifur group sits alone with EC today

Pro-Khaleda faction refuses to join them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saifur Rahman-led faction of BNP alone participates in electoral reform talks with the Election Commission (EC) today as the other faction loyal to detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has refused to take part in the dialogue together with them.

Unless any dramatic development takes place overnight, a 10-member delegation of pro-Saifur faction would join the dialogue at the EC Secretariat at 10:00am, ending over six months of tussle between the two factions for EC's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Delwar loyals sued for breaking EPR

4 ex-MPs among 14 named in FIR; many leaders go into hiding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police on Friday night filed a case against about 60 people including four ex-MPs of the pro-Khaleda faction of BNP for violating the state of emergency through staging demonstrations at the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat gate on April 17.

Sub-inspector Dipak Kumar Pal of the Tejgaon Police Station filed the First Information Report (FIR) under the Emergency Powers Rules (EPR) mentioning names of 14

people. The others -- around 40 to 50 people -- were not named.

Several leaders of pro-Khaleda faction were learnt to have gone into hiding last night fearing possible arrest.

The accused former lawmakers are -- Bilkis Jahan Shirin, Rehana Akhter Ranu, Saimum Begum and Shirin Sultana, also the general secretary of Dhaka city unit of Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal.

Rest of the FIR-named accused are -- Khaleda Zia's Assistant Press

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## NEW UNITY PROPOSAL Saifur group for Bhuiyan, Hannan, Hafiz in BNP standing body

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The pro-Saifur faction of BNP is pushing forward a new unity formula, urging its rival faction to accommodate Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Maj (ret) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and Brig Gen (ret) Hannan Shah in the standing committee of the party.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, who is now mediating unification of the two rivals, yesterday discussed the proposal with Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the chairperson-appointed secretary general of the party, at the speaker's Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban office.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

## SEISMIC SURVEY Fire causes damage in Lawachhara

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI,  
Moulvibazar

A fire during 3D seismic survey of Chevron Bangladesh yesterday burnt down forestry in a large area while explosions during the survey caused around 30 structures in the Lawachhara National Forest to develop cracks in the last two days.

Locals and forest department personnel doused the fire in an

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## CNG three-wheeler, taxi fares hiked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two days after almost doubling of the price of compressed natural gas (CNG), the government yesterday raised fares for CNG-run autorickshaws to Tk 6 a km, non-air-conditioned taxis to Tk 8 and air-conditioned (AC) taxis to Tk 10.

The minimum fare for non-AC and AC taxis were doubled from Tk 15 and Tk 20 while the autorickshaws' minimum fare was raised to Tk 18 from Tk 13.50. The

previous fare for autorickshaws, non-AC taxis and AC taxis were Tk 5.50, Tk 6 and Tk 8.

However, the CNG-run buses would not be allowed to hike their fares.

Drivers of autorickshaws and taxis would have to hang a chart of fares in their vehicles until meter calibration is completed, ATKM Ismail, additional secretary of the communications ministry, told The Daily Star last night.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO STAR

Women and children of low income group scavenge through a ditch in Haalisahar of Chittagong for rice yesterday. Rotten relief rice was dumped there two days ago.

## TOKEN HUNGER STRIKE AL men asked to observe it strategically, not to violate EPR

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Awami League (AL) leadership yesterday verbally instructed leaders of the party's district units across the country to observe 'strategically' the earlier announced token hunger strike on April 29 for the release of detained party President Sheikh Hasina and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## News analysis

# Credible poll now big challenge

SHAKHAWAT LITON

With a caretaker government working to prepare grounds for sustainable democracy through a fair election, political analysts feel that some recent developments appear to be major threats to holding a credible parliamentary election.

Irked by the Election Commission's (EC) decision to invite only Saifur Rahman-led faction of BNP to an electoral reform talk, pro-Khaleda Zia faction of the party led by detained chairperson appointed General Secretary Khandaker Delwar Hossain, announced that it will not partici-

pate in the next parliamentary election under the incumbent EC.

Saifur-led faction is however ready to contest in the parliamentary election, which is supposed to be held by the year end according to the EC announced electoral roadmap the military backed caretaker government pledged to support all-out.

In a latest development, top Awami League (AL) leaders also started saying that they will also not contest in the poll without the release of their detained chief Sheikh Hasina, as grassroots level leaders and workers of the party have been putting pressure on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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A Contract Signing Ceremony between **MEGHNA SHIP BUILDERS & DOCKYARD LTD.**, Bangladesh (A Unit of Meghna Group of Industries) and **STX CORPORATION/ STX HEAVY INDUSTRIES CO. LTD.**, Korea (One of the leading ship builders in the world) was held on 23 April 2008 at Meghna Group of Industries Head Office, Gulshan, Dhaka.

This will be the largest ship building facility of International Standard in Bangladesh.

Mr. Mohd. Jashim Uddin, Executive Director, Meghna Group of Industries and Mr. B. H. Sim, Director, STX Corporation signed the contract on behalf of their respective organization. Mr. Mostafa Kamal, Chairman & Managing Director, Meghna Group of Industries, Mr. W. G. Jang, Vice Chairman, Mr. Kim Hyun Kyu/ P.E., Executive Managing Director, STX Heavy Industries Co. Ltd., Mr. I. L. Park, Counsellor & Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of The Republic of Korea in Bangladesh and Mr. Hanil Kim, Resident Trade Representative Korea Trade Centre (KOTRA), Dhaka were also present on the occasion.

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